(b) whether the Railways need to shake off their traditional system of subsidies by tariff rationalisation and introduction of new equipment and technology; and

(c) if so, what are Governments views in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.

(c) There is no plan to unbundle Indian Railways by privatisation. However. certain activities like catering & tourism and optical fibre based telecommunication network are being hived off as separate corporations. Certain uneconomic branch lines are also being considered for concessioning. In the recent railway budget proposals, a beginning has been made to rationalise the freight structure by removing certain anomalies that had crept up in the course of time. It has also been proposed to rationalise the passenger fares for proper tariff rebalancing by modifying the taper in the fare structure to remove the existing anomalies and making other marginal changes in respect of minimum fares and rationalising the relativity of fares of various classes.

New equipment and technology are being introduced in various sphere of activity on Indian Railways from year to year.

Purchase of loco simulators

1436. SHRI R. P. GOENKA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a proposal to purchase 13 loco simulators, at a cost of Rs. 100 crores, for providing state-of-the-art training at to the loco drivers has been held up in protracted negotiations for over four years, due to complicated procurement procedures, forcing the Railways to purchase obsolete technology and at a cost, much higher than the price prevailing today;

(b) if so, the details of the original proposal/deal cotracted & its present status; and

(c) the steps taken to procure the latest technology at competitive rates & to simplify procurement procedure?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL): (a) and (b) Purchase of simulator for augmenting the training of the train drivers has since been finalized and the counter offer to the lowest

acceptable bidder has been issued for 12 Loco Simulators. Being a sophisticated equipment, procurement of this item warranted a detailed technical study of the offered equipment its technology & the reasonableness of the offered rates. The whole process is obviously time consuming. The purchase was thereafter made for the state of the art technology equipment at the most competitive prices.

(c) To achieve competitive rates, negotiation was conducted with the lowest acceptable tenderer as per guidelines of the Chief Vigilance Commission, duly following the latest procurement procedures laid down for Government purchase.

Medical facilities at railway stations of Rajasthan

1437. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have any plan to provide medical facilties at all the major railways stations in Rajasthan; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and if not the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL): (a) No Sir.

(b) Does not arise. However, as a good will gesture, First Aid facilities are provided in emergencies for which First aid boxes are provided and staff trained in First Aid are available at all railway stations. Recently these First Aid boxes have been augmented with additional medicines and series of equipment to improve the services. A list of non railways medical facilities available in the vicinity of railway stations has also been compiled and has been made available at all Railways stations and also on Railnet for the convenience of the railways staff at the time of need.

Extension of Shatabdi Express upto Gorakhpur

†1438. SHRI DEVI PRASAD SINGH: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any plan to extend the New Delhi-Lucknow Shatabdi Express upto Gorakhpur Junction.

(b) if so, by when the same would be implemented; if not the reasons therefore; and

†Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.